

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01 /066 W

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R 112040Z JUL 77

FM AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7863

INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAO PAULO 1794

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, BR

SUBJ: INTERIM OPPOSITION LEADER VIEWS POLITICAL SITUATION

REF: A) BRASILIA 5623, B) BRASILIA 5504

1. SUMMARY: FREITAS NOBRE, PROBABLE FUTURE OPPOSITION LEADER IN CHAMBER, TOLD CONGEN OFF THAT HE INTENDED TO LOWER TONE OF OPPOSITION RHETORIC BUT MAINTAIN FIRM IDEOLOGICAL LINE. FRIETAS NOBRE STATED THAT MILITARY SUPPORT FOR REGIME, ALTHOUGH FULL OF TENSIONS, IS SOLID, BUT PUBLIC OPINION IS BEGINNING TO ARTICULATE SPECIFIC GRIEVANCES WITH REGIME. HE EXPECTS FURTHER HARDENING OF REGIME WITH MORE CASSATIONS OF OPPOSITION POLITICIANS, A PROBABLE SELECTION OF ONE OF THE TWO FRONT-RUNNER--FIGUEIREDO OR FROTA--AS GEISEL'S SUCCESSOR, FOLLOWED BY THE POSSIBILITY OF A REVIEW OF THAT CHOICE IN THE FACE OF POPULAR DISAPPROVAL. FREITAS NOBRE MAY BE OVER-OPTIMISTIC ABOUT BRAZILIAN POLITICAL DYNAMICS FROM AN OPPOSITION POINT OF VIEW, BUT HIS STYLE AND IDEOLOGICAL FIRMNESS AS OPPOSITION LEADER MAY BE MORE DIFFICULT TO CENSURE THAN WAS ALENCAR FURTADO'S. END SUMMARY.

2. SAO PAULO FEDERAL DEPUTY FREITAS NOBRE TOLD CONGEN OFF THAT HE EXPECTED TO BE NAMED OFFICIALLY LEADER OF OPPOSITION WHEN CONGRESS  
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RECONVENES IN AUGUST. WHILE HE LAMENTS CASSATION OF HIS FRIEND ALENCAR FURTADO, FREITAS NOBRE IS ENJOYING THE PROSPECTS OF HIS NEW PROMINENCE AND INTENDS TO LEAD CHAMBER OPPOSITION DIFFERENTLY: WITH LESS RHETORIC BUT FIRM IDEOLOGICAL LINE. HE HAD WANTED THE MDB TO REACT MORE VIGOROUSLY TO FURTADO'S CASSATION, BUT THE RIO DE JANEIRO SECTION OF THE MDB -- THE ONLY STATE WHERE, UNDER CURRENT ELECTORAL RULES, THE OPPOSITION HAS A CHANCE OF GAINING POWER --

DID NOT WANT TO IRRITATE THE GOVERNMENT FURTHER. FREITAS NOBRE WENT ALONG BECAUSE HE NEEDS THE RIO MDB'S SUPPORT TO BECOME LEADER.

3. FREITAS NOBRE STATED THAT OPPOSITION WAS DISSILUSIONED WITH "DIALOGUE" WITH GOVERNMENT. HOPES HAD BEEN HIGH IN MDB FOR AGREEMENT WITH GOVERNMENT TO ELIMINATE FIFTH INSTITUTIONAL ACT AND ADOPT CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES TO MAKE IT UNNECESSARY. BUT MDB REPS DISCOVERED THAT GEISEL'S FORMER PRESS SECRETARY, HUMBERTO BARTELLO AND OTHER PEOPLE THEY WERE TALKING WITH WERE NOT AUTHORIZED TO NEGOTIATE. FREITAS NOBRE SAID HE WOULD NOW ONLY ENGAGE IN AUTHORIZED NEGOTIATIONS, BUT MERE CONVERSATIONS.

4. ON OTHER HAND, FREITAS NOBRE OPINED THAT ANTI-GOVERNMENT PUBLIC OPINION WAS A POTENTIALLY VOLATILE NEW ELEMENT IN POLITICAL EQUATION. HE SAID MDB TOOK CREDIT FOR LEADING IN FORMATION OF THIS PUBLIC OPINION. BUT HE NOTED THAT ANTI-GOVERNMENT OPINION WAS EXPRESSED IN TERMS OF THWARTED INTERESTS OF NARROW GROUPS AND ASSOCIATIONS. THE MDB DID NOT CONTROL IT NOR HAD THESE GROUPS PRODUCED NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED LEADERS. FREITAS NOBRE OBSERVED THAT PUBLIC OPINION WAS NOW AT THE STATE OF ARTICULATING WHAT IT WAS AGAINST - UNLIMITED POWER OF THE PRESIDENT, LACK OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION -- AND SOON MIGHT MOVE TO MILITATING IN FAVOR OF SPECIFIC CHANGES.

5. SPECULATING ON FUTURE, FREITAS NOBRE SAID HE EXPECTED MILITARY "SYSTEM" TO CHOOSE SNI CHIEF FIGUEIREDO  
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OR ARMY MINISTER FROTA, AS GEISEL'S SUCCESSOR, THEN MIGHT WELL HAVE TO REVISE THAT CHOICE IN FACE OF POPULAR DISAPPROVAL. HE STATED THAT THE MILITARY WERE UNITED AT THE PRESENT TIME, BUT DEEP TENSIONS EXISTED WITHIN THE MILITARY AND HE THOUGHT THE CHOICE OF EITHER OF THE HIGHLY CONTESTED FRONT-RUNNERS MIGHT PROVOKE FISSURES WITHIN THE MILITARY. FREITAS NOBRE ALSO EXPECTED CONTINUED HARDENING OF REGIME, INCLUDING MORE CASSATIONS. "I TOLD (SAO PAULO DEPUTY) AIRTON SOARES NOT TO COME BACK TO BRAZIL UNTIL WE ARE READY, BECAUSE HE WILL BE CASSATED AS SOON AS HE RETURNS." HE NOTED THAT MDB DID NOT WANT CIVIL STRIFE, BUT DID WANT A CHANGE OF REGIME AND WOULD KEEP PRESSURE ON GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, HE APPEARED WORRIED ABOUT SUPPORT OF RIO DE JANEIRO MDB REPRESENTATION, WHICH WANTED TO AVOID STRONG OPPOSITION IN ORDER TO GAIN POWER IN RIO IN 1978.

6. COMMENT: FREITAS NOBRE WILL PROBABLY BECOME MDB CHAMBER LEADER. HE WILL PROBABLY CAUSE THE REGIME LESS HEART-BURN THAN FURTADO BECAUSE OF HIS LOW KEY MANNER, BUT MAY ALSO HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME KEEPING THE MDB MODERATES AND "AUTENTICOS" TOGETHER FOR THE SAME REASON. HE MAINTAINS A GOOD PRESS IMAGE -- HE WAS PRESIDENT OF THE SAO PAULO JOURNALISTS SYNDICATE -- AND MAKES MUCH OF HIS MILITARY CONTACTS -- HE IS A COLONEL IN THE ARMY RESERVE. BUT

BENEATH HIS MILD EXTERIOR, FREITAS NOBRE IS A MAN OF PRINCIPAL.  
IT WAS HE WHO LED THE MDB TO REJECT MASSIVELY THE GOVERNMENT'S  
JUDICIAL REFORM BILL THAT RESULTED I THE CLOSING OF CONGRESS IN  
APRIL. HIS IDEOLOGICAL LINE AS A NON-COMMUNIST SOCIALIST HAS BEEN  
CONSISTENT FOR OVER TWENTY FIVE YEARS. CHANCES ARE THAT FREITAS  
NOBRE WILL LEAD A MORE EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION THAT FURTADO DID,  
AND MAY BE MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO CENSURE. AS IN  
PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS, FREITAS NOBRE WAS APT TO SEE DEEPER  
POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS IN IMMEDIATE MANIFESTATIONS OF POPULAR  
DISCONTENT THAN SOME OTHER OBSERVERS SEE.  
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## Message Attributes

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